

elections in Aceh were held on December 11, 2006, and more than 80 percent of entitled Acehnese voted; and

Whereas Irwandi Yusuf, a former leader of the Free Aceh Movement, won the gubernatorial election with the highest support of more than 38 percent of total votes: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

(1) commends the first democratic elections in Aceh, a province in Sumatra, Indonesia, in which the Acehnese have shown their strong commitment to democracy and peace, and congratulates Irwandi Yusuf, the first democratic elected governor of Aceh;

(2) expresses its ongoing support for the further democratic development of Aceh and the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement on August 15, 2005;

(3) encourages both parties to live up to their commitments under the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding, especially with regard to establishing a Human Rights Court for Aceh and a Commission of Truth and Reconciliation; and

(4) encourages the Secretary of State and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development to commit resources in supporting the peace and building a strong civil society in Aceh.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from American Samoa.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the resolution being considered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from American Samoa?

There was no objection.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank the leadership of our House Foreign Affairs Committee, the distinguished gentleman from California, Chairman TOM LANTOS, and our senior ranking member, Congresswoman ROS-LEHTINEN, for their support and their leadership in bringing this bill to the floor. I would also like to thank our distinguished colleague from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) for introducing this important resolution.

Mr. Speaker, on December 11, 2006, the Indonesian province of Aceh was host to one of the truly exceptional events in recent world history. Only 2 years after a devastating tsunami claimed some 165,000 lives of the people of Aceh, which is a province of Indonesia, and following three decades, almost 30 years, of violent conflict that ravaged this region, the courageous people of Aceh held peaceful and democratic elections. It was an inspiring testament to the human spirit.

More than 80 percent of eligible voters cast their ballots in this landmark

election. It signaled a new chapter in the lives of the beleaguered people of Aceh and served as a bold demonstration of the power of democracy and diplomacy throughout the world.

Diplomacy, Mr. Speaker. This election could not have taken place without the willingness of the Government of Indonesia and the armed fighters of the Free Aceh Movement to take the important step of choosing peace over violence to settle their differences. After decades of bloody battle, the two sides put down their arms and negotiated the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding on August 15, 2006.

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Mr. Speaker, we have seen it from Northern Ireland to South Africa and around the world. When government and rebel groups are finally willing to lay down their arms and come to the negotiating table, agreements previously thought not possible can suddenly come to fruition.

In addition to calling for elections, the Aceh Memorandum of Understanding also calls for the establishment of a Human Rights Court and a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, very similar to what happened in South Africa. It is important that these bodies be established without delay so that Aceh can begin to heal and then fulfill its potential.

In choosing to settle their dispute peacefully and committing to a democratic process, the Government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement showed true leadership by putting the people of Aceh first. This resolution commends this bold choice and the elections that it produced, supports the full implementation of the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding, recognizes how far Aceh has come, and expresses hope for the future.

Mr. Speaker, I also would like to recognize the leadership of the President of Indonesia, President Susilo Yudhoyono. I know he played a most critical role in bringing about a peaceful solution to the province of Aceh. Just as in my recent discussions with him a couple of months ago, he had given promise that he is also totally committed to the full implementation of the autonomy law that was passed by the Indonesian Parliament to provide for greater democracy and self-rule for the people of West Papua. I know this issue is not related to the Aceh situation, but I do know it is connected to the fact that Jakarta or the Government of Indonesia is the government responsible for what has happened between these two provinces.

But I do want to give recognition to President SBY, as he is usually known in Indonesia, for his leadership and for his efforts in bringing finally to a peaceful solution the situation in the province of Aceh.

I fully support this resolution, and I ask my colleagues to support its passage.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume and rise in support of H. Res. 238, which commends the momentous Democratic elections held in Aceh, Indonesia this past December.

For decades, that region of northern Sumatra was caught in seemingly endless cycles of retribution. Separatist violence by the Free Aceh Movement, known as the GAM, provoked brutal crackdowns by the Indonesian military, and far too often it was the civilians in the middle who paid the price. That conflict and the mistrust of both sides appeared insurmountable.

Then, on December 26, 2004, an even more terrible tragedy struck the area. The Indian Ocean tsunami suddenly snuffed out over 165,000 lives in Aceh alone, devastated the coastline, and displaced hundreds of thousands more.

In January of 2005, within days of the tsunami, I visited the devastated coastline and the Banda Aceh aid center, along with the United States Navy crews who were providing water and logistical support from the USS *Abraham Lincoln* for humanitarian relief efforts.

It was a cataclysm of biblical proportions. But the immensity of the suffering it caused also diminished the relative significance of the political conflicts that had afflicted those communities for so long. Since then, we have seen progress towards democracy and reconciliation that would have not appeared possible beforehand.

The signing of the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding, the withdrawal of Indonesian troops and military from outside of Aceh, the demobilization of the GAM forces and the enactment of the law on the governing of Aceh were all and are very positive and hopeful signs.

Over 80 percent of the eligible Acehnese voters participated in last December's peaceful district and gubernatorial elections, and in an unmistakable sign of change, the former GAM leader, Irwandi Yusuf, was elected as governor.

Of course, the work of long-term reconciliation and building of a strong civil society will take time and continued cooperation from all parties. Thus, it is appropriate that this resolution encourages both sides to live up to their commitments under the Helsinki Memorandum, particularly with regard to establishing a Human Rights Court for Aceh and a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Having personally witnessed the suffering of the Acehnese and the devastation of their homes and livelihoods following the tsunami, I am particularly hopeful that we are witnessing the springtime of democracy, peace and development in Aceh.

I want to thank Mr. CROWLEY for presenting us with this opportunity to congratulate the people of Aceh and the Government of Indonesia on the progress they have achieved so far.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.